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AUTHOR Walshok, Mary Lindenstein
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ABSTRACT

Women's success in nontraditional blue collar jobs in the skilled trades or crafts appears to be tied to three separate but interrelated issues which are a function of differences in social background and shift in the structure of employment and economic opportunities for women, according to qualitative data gathered in in-depth interviews of more than 100 women in three western cities. The three critical issues are "self identification as a worker": "work savvy" based on lengthy work experience in blue collar environments: and "task competency," knowing what's required to do the job and what has to be done to become competent. The women were interviewed as they were entering a new employment or training setting and were followed over a three-year period. Preliminary findings suggest a profile of the high probability succeeder in a nontraditional blue collar job. The study also suggests the need to evaluate existing social policy and strategies for recruiting and developing women in nontraditional skilled jobs in terms of the extent to which the policies (1) assure a minimal familiarity with blue collar work and workers prior to job assignment: (2) focus on helping people become competent at the job rather than striving for "acceptance" of newcomers in the job: (3) promote surrounding newcomers with task-competent and "savvy" men and women: and (4) assure stable employment. (In-depth interviews with three women are included.) (KC)

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FACTORS AFFECTING SUCCESS FOR WOMEN IN SKILLED BLUE COLLAR JOBS

by

Mary Lindenstein Walshok

University of California San Diego

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the Society for the Study of Social Problems,
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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Understanding the complex question of how women succeed in skilled blue collar jobs from which they have been previously excluded is no easy task. Clearly a combination of structural, interpersonal and individual factors has to be considered. Because the movement of women into these jobs is a recent phenomenon and because of the dearth of research on blue collar working women generally, we decided to try to understand this problem by means of in-depth interviews. We talked with women as they were entering a new employment or training setting and followed their progress over a three-year period. With funds from the Metropolitan Research Center, NIMH, we were able to interview over one hundred women in three western cities. 80% of the women were moving into nontraditional jobs such as auto mechanics, welding, small appliance repair and carpentry. The remainder were beginning jobs or training in more conventional areas such as electronics assembly, laundering and dry cleaning, and cosmetology.

The overall research has been driven by a number of questions relevant to the process of vocational choice making, on the job experiences, the meaning of work in women's lives, and the integration of work roles and family roles. This paper represents a <u>preliminary</u> discussion of contextual and personal factors which seem to be associated with continued employment in a nontraditional blue collar job over a two to three year period. Our research is essentially qualitative and our "findings" rely heavily on content analyses of responses to open ended questions supported with only a few quantitative measures.

<u>The Findings</u>

Success in a nontraditional blue collar job in the skilled trades or crafts appears to be intimately tied to three separate but interrelated issues which in turn are a function of differences in social background and shifts in the structure of employment and economic opportunities for women in the larger society. These three critical

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factors are:

I. Self Image
II. Work Savvy
III. Task Competency

Let's define each of the factors a little more precisely.

Self image is not simply how confident you are. How positive and efficacious you are in your dealings with the environment. It is not simply motivation, a need for autonomy, energy, and perseverance. Among the women who were successful over the three-year period, these were clearly important dimensions. However, what appears to be even more important is what we defined as "self identification as a worker."

The women we interviewed varied in the extent to which having a job figured into their primary sense of themselves. Work was more often mentioned as a part of their girlhood fantasies, their expectations about adult roles, and in their current images of the good life. Paid employment is a "taken-for-granted" aspect of self identity rather than a "problematic" aspect. This proved to be in large, a function of a working class background and having a mother who worked. It was also tied to early and continuous employment experiences.

Work savvy is an interesting and somewhat subtle factor. It does not mean knowledge about a particular job or job setting as much as it means a general sense, feeling for, "savvy" regarding paid employment generally: how one learns about and finds employment, sensitivities that help you succeed in <u>any</u> work environment, knowledge about how to learn your job and the rules of the game, a sense of how to build additional opportunities from given work experiences. It's a kind of "gestalt;" an ability to assess the opportunities and obstacles in the environment accurately, an ability to utilize information and personal networks to your own work ends, an ability to assess your own strengths

and weaknesses and know how to get help. Work savvy is largely a function of lengthy work experience and in the case of our study, experience in blue collar environments. It is also a function of informal relationships with successful blue collar workers through family relationships, spouse or friends. It also embodies a certain familiarity with and sensitivity to the problems and life-style of the community of workers you are a part of; again in our case, blue collar men.

The final factor, task competency, is perhaps the most critical. It relates to how accurately a person assesses what's required to successfully do the job and knowing what has to be done to become competent. It involves an ability to forego the short term satisfactions of being liked and accepted by the group if it risks learning the job and long run success. It involves knowing who can teach you, help you, and sponsor you and relying on that resource regardless of his or her sex or attitudes about women in blue collar work. Task competency is more possible in some environments than others. Counter-intuitively, our research suggests that successful women workers are more often lone women than in groups, experience the same amount of harrassment from men as do less successful women, and have no greater access to job related information and training than do less successful women. What they do have is an attitude about work that zeroes in on "getting to know and do the job", first and foremost, combined with a genuine liking for the job tasks they are attempting to master.

How these factors play themselves out can be dramatically demonstrated by a brief look at three very different women whom we interviewed and followed over the full three-year period.

Three Portraits

Jan Spencer had a small "boyish" figure, firm and muscular, suggesting a great deal of physical strength and agility. She pointed out with pride during our interview how long it had taken her to develop the

muscles in her arms and back and legs to their current fitness. She was dressed in levis, a leather jacket and boots, and her hands had deep dark lines of dirt and grease ingrained in the skin and under her nails. Her hair was short and curly and dark, and her eyes were alive and intelligent. There was softness and sympathy in her manner that suggested a depth of what we commonly describe as "feminine character." She described her dress and physical stature as necessary to the kind of work she is doing and has always done--mechanics. Jan is also gay. Most important, however, is Jan's consciousness of herself as working class. Without prompting she emphasized how her working class status has always been and will always be more significant to her than her femaleness or her gayness. This consciousness and her sense of her trade is what makes Jan prototypical of one kind of women we encountered in our many interviews over the two years.

Jan grew up in a rural nonfarm community in the midwest. She had two sisters and one brother, all younger than she. Her father was a millright, a tool and die maker, and her mother would periodically get jobs like waitressing in order to get away from the house and the kids. Jan described a childhood in which her father's income was low enough and unstable enough that they were always worrying about the gas and electricity being turned off. She guessed that at the most he made (what in today's currency) would amount to about $8,000 a year. Her mother was nervous and uncomfortable with her children, and the house was always unclean and chaotic. In fact, on a couple of occasions the welfare department complained about the lack of cleanliness and unsanitary conditions of their house. "Clothes piled in corners, dog shit on the floor, no telephone--a real pigpen" is how Jan described her house.

It was in some ways difficult to talk with Jan about her past, because she has tried to block out the first sixteen years of her life, which were lonely and unhappy. She described her parents as "never having any idea what I was doing, and they didn't much care." Their attitudes was "you do for yourself," and if she wanted anything, she earned her own money. Jan began getting odd jobs at age ten and by age

fifteen was working nearly forty hours a week as a waitress in the afternoons and evenings while in high school. Her school, in a working class area, was on two shifts so she got out by noon. She didn't have friends because "the house was the pits" and she didn't want to bring them home, but she also stayed pretty much to herself because she discovered she was gay at twelve and was "terrified someone would find out about it." While growing up she spent some time playing baseball and soccer with neighbor kids and a lot of time by herself, "in the garage building things, using tools....I liked reading a lot."

Jan didn't like high school much. She described people as what she disliked most about high school and band as what she like most. She "liked band the most because it was a structured way of being in a group. I knew what to expect and what was expected of me." By high school Jan knew she wanted to go into the army, because she felt that the army was "realistically the only way to get out of that god-damned town." She also liked the structured social environment she thought she would get in the army, the idea of being with other women and most importantly the opportunity to get an education in a trade, mechanics Jan got little counseling in school and got "C's" in most of her classes. She never even considered college prep classes or going to college, because she know she could never find the money and her grades weren't good enough for a scholarship. Jan has an I.Q. of 152.

Jan got some of the vocational training she was looking for in the army. She also got into a lot of trouble because of a romance with a woman. To avoid a court martial and to cover up her involvement with a woman, Jan decided to "try the other route" and got married. With the G. I. Bill she could now afford to go to school, and she started out in a community college medical technology program and tried to live a conventional life as a married woman in school. She speaks fondly of her former husband and of his family, but she also realized that marriage with a man wasn't what she really wanted--nor was a college degree. "...Anything you get with a college degree will have you pushing papers, and I didn't want to do that. With the divorce I realized I had to do what I wanted to do, so I switched from college to trade school."

The next six years of Jan's life included two years of trade school which in the beginning was "just horrendous: where I'm sure guys wanted to beat me up in the parking lot," to the end of trade school, where "people had a lot of respect for me, and on the basis of the work I had done there, they decided they were going to recruit women themselves."

During and after trade school Jan worked in gas stations and eventually moved to San Francisco, working in a couple of major car dealerships as an apprentice mechanic, despite her two years of trade school training. She was recruited by a major metropolitan transportation system as a junior mechanic, which was her occupation when I interviewed her. She is now a senior mechanic and is the team chief of a group of male mechanics who do repair work and preventative maintenance work on rapid transit vehicles. Jan has a great deal of respect for her fellow workers and is irritated by the abrasiveness of political rhetoric of some of the other women--particularly "politicos who are very intolerant of working class men," - she encounters in nontraditional jobs. She occasionally bowls and drinks beer with some of her co-workers, and she has also been invited home for dinner with some of their families. She is making over twenty thousand dollars a year and has just bought a house. Her love life is complicated, and she wishes she had a "wife" who could cook and help with all the daily problems of keeping her house and her life together.

Jan is obviously competent of her trade. She likes her work and where she is working. She has been a tremendous success at nontraditional work from the days when she was the only woman in a trade school of 1300, to today, where she is a team chief and senior mechanic for a major rapid transit company. Her love of her trade came through in both of my interviews with her. She has also developed a diversity of interests and skills as a function of her interest in mechanics and working with men in blue collar jobs. The following extended quotation highlights Jan's sense of what and how she has learned her trade over the years.

> Well, the skills and abilities are technical, and women aren't trained: they're not trained to get them. They're not encouraged to go after them, and I mean it's obvious that they don't have them; they just don't have. They don't go into the armed forces--I mean, half the guys on a crew learn their skills in the Navy.
>
> You know, I went into the army. I learned my electrical there. There aren't a lot of women veterans, however, and the ones that are around generally weren't in technical fields because--now anyway--because they just in the last couple of years started putting women in technical fields. And there aren't that many women who go in in the first place. That accounts for a large portion of people. Then there's also the fact that men just tinker around with these things....they talk to each other about things. I mean, I've learned things from men; if it hadn't been a situation where I was working with men all the time and doing the technical things, I wouldn't even have thought about other stuff--you know, about diesel engines. I never worked on diesel engines, but I know a lot about them from talking to guys back and forth, you know. About six months ago, they took me out and I learned to drive Mack wreckers, 3/4 ton trucks, (laugh), road diesels and tractor trailers, and I went down and took the test--I have every license that California offers right now. And that's because I'm in a male job, because you know, I'm around them all the time, and I express an interest. They said okay, you know....I mean, how is a woman who is in college or, ah,or being a secretary ever going to run across an opportunity to even discuss those kinds of things with men. I had to like, aside from actually going out and driving a truck--I had to like bullshit with them for hours to find out how to change lanes, what a downshift is, how to downshift, what an overrev was. You know, before I could even entrust myself out on that--on a road with that truck, and you know, like what cops look out for and everything.

Jan is constantly getting information from her colleagues. She is certain that her success is due to her skills, certainly, but it is also clear that her respect for the men with whom she works is genuine. At the conclusion of our second interview, when I asked her what her ideal or fantasy life would be, she responded, "I would like to live in

the country and do bench work, which is take small components and repair them. That would be what I would like to do. Someday I will do that, I hope.'

In sharp contrast to Jan is Kate Mills, another woman I interviewed in the Bay Area, who was working for the same metropolitan transit company. Kate's feelings about her job and her co-workers were almost antithetical to Jan's. Her social background, her educational and work experiences were radically different as well. On the surface they seemed very much alike; gay women in their late-twenties living in San Francisco political and feminist in their understanding of society; working as some of the first women employed as mechanics in a major rapid transit system after excellent performance in trade school. The similarities stopped there, however, and the in-depth interviews revealed two very different people.

The first time I interviewed Kate she was quite definite about not liking to work. What's important to her is doing what she "likes to do" when she feels like it" and playing music in an all-female band. She indicated that if she could make money at her music, she might do that, but I felt throughout my interview with Kate that finding and exploring life was still more important to her than stable, paid employment, and that her music had never been seriously pursued as a vocation. The only child of an upper middle class 'WASP' family in the midwest, Kate's conversation was laced with metaphors and preoccupations familiar to anyone who has taught affluent undergraduate students. Describing her parents as well off, deeply religious, and conventional in their life-style, Kate recalled a childhood characterized by a great deal of flexibility and a comfortable lifestyle. Kate got good grades and was active in band and music in high school. She determined her own hours when dating, was given her own car on her sixteenth birthday, and attended a private church-related college. She had fantasies as a child about going on the stage and described herself as being frequently lonely.

She belonged to a sorority and had her first serious affair with a woman in her sophomore year. As she got more disenchanted with college, her grades got worse, and with her parents support, she left college to do some traveling. Kate had intermittent odd jobs working in retail sales, as a correspondent for a book publishing company and as a baker's assistant. The first job she had for any length of time was as a counselor and teacher in a drug rehabilitation center in a major midwestern city where she worked for over two and a half years with a group of old school friends who had helped set up the program. At age 25, Kate and two friends decided to "hit the road" in a van and traveled around the country from Iowa, to Denver, to Albuquerque doing odd jobs and seeing the sights. They ended up in San Francisco, and Kate decided by then that she "really wanted to get into electricity." She had always been curious about electricity; playing music had peaked her interest in amplification, and she wanted a skill "with power". She signed up for a training program at a Community College Skill Center, was easily the best in her class, and within five months landed a job as an electronic technician with a major metropolitan transit authority. She indicated that Affirmative Action helped her get the job for which she felt she was "fully capable though not yet entirely qualified."

By our second interview, Kate had just quit her job. She had been working the graveyard shift for many months, was isolated and getting very little training. She had been passed over for training and advancement opportunities. Other women were not having her same problems; in fact they were doing well, she reported. She also emphasized that they were "straight" and "really into their cars and paychecks and things like that." She emphasized that she really enjoyed electronics but that she couldn't take working for "the bureaucracy." She had to get out. When I asked her what her ideal job would be, she replied, "Playing beautiful music for lesbians."

In our interview Kate shared a number of contradictory feelings. On the one hand, she was conscious that her middle class background had freed her from a lot of the pressures which kids with working class

parents face, but on the other hand, she really disliked the values of her working class co-workers and talked about feeling isolated from their world.

> I mean, I existed in two worlds. I spoke a totally different language....was around people I would never otherwise associate with....around equipment I never saw anywhere else, doing something I would never do anywhere else, and when I would get home, I would leave all that behind. There's a lot of things that interest me, and three hours a day is enough for technical stuff.

Kate also described her work as terribly lonely.

> It's lonely; I mean, when I do things, I like to....well, I like to do things by myself, but there's a lot of times when I at least like to show off. I mean, there's nobody there to see me who I cared about you know...ah... here I am sitting in this little room, all surrounded by screens, and working on this radio--I felt like a surgeon a lot of time.

Kate's comments about her experience on her job and her feelings towards her co-workers were in sharp contrast to Jan's. Whereas Jan "palled around" with her co-workers to some extent, respected their abilities, and felt a great deal of pride in herself for impressing them with her abilities, Kate felt isolated and downright superior to the men and the women she was encountering in the blue collar world. She was also highly critical of Jan, whom she saw as "hiding her lesbianism and playing up to the men." Jan in turn saw Kate as a middle class radical who had "no sensitivity to where these working class guys were coming from" and who "could always write home to daddy for money." Jan also has a compelling and long-lived interest in mechanics. She spends much of her free time "tinkering at a bench: while Kate felt divided between her work world and her personal life, not only socially but intellectually.

In stark contrast to both Jan and Kate is Maria Gonzales, a San Diego woman who was in a training program for launderers and pressers

when we first interviewed her. Maria represents the working poor, a woman who holds jobs off and on and is off and on welfare frequently. She has been through a number of government sponsored training program but has never developed a secure enough sense of herself or of a skill to get into a permanent employment situation. Maria is typical of a large and significant category of women in the semiskilled labor force.

Maria was born in Mexico and came to the United States (in her adolescence) in 1943, living in a border town, Mexicali, for most of her childhood. One of eight children, when her father died, she, the eldest, immediately went to work at the age of fourteen to help support the family. Because of this and her poor grades in school (because of her poor English), Maria dropped out of high school at fifteen. She helped her mother raise the kids and worked primarily in the fields and canneries. Even when her father was alive the family would go north every summer to pick fruit. Maria gave all of her money to her family. She did not describe her childhood as unhappy or as poor, particularly through the years when her father was still alive. When asked what she expected in her adult life, she said she always expected to have a family and kids. In fact one of the reasons she dropped out of high school was that she "took the attitude, you don't have to have a diploma to have a baby."

Maria has had a variety of jobs earning as little as $35 a week and as much as $85 a week. She's worked most frequently over her fifteen adult years as a seamstress and stitcher in a men's suit factory. She has done other kinds of factory work, has been a hospital aide (even considered going into nursing) and has worked as a waitress, cook's helper, punch press operator, and electronics assembler. In all these years, Maria has never held a job for more than a few months at a time due to injuries, layoffs, or transportation problems. Over the three years we followed her she was training to be a presser and quite excited by that, but she confessed to concerns that she wasn't very good or fast at it, according to her instructor. By her second year interview, she was back at the suit factory sewing after a brief

period of unemployment, and by her third year she was unemployed and living on welfare. Maria stated that her ideal income would be $3/hour.

Maria and her family have been on and off of welfare most of their lives. Divorced from her erratically employed husband and supporting four children, Maria says that on the one hand she needs and wants a secure job, but on the other continually expresses values indicating her feelings that men should work hard and be responsible for their families and women should be able to stay at home and care properly for their children. She has been in nearly half a dozen government training programs over the years and spends a lot of time going to school and working in an effort to develop a skill and get a good job. Maria seems to fail at whatever she's tried. Her kids skip school a lot and get into trouble with the police more than she would like. She's always being threatened that her phone and electricity will be shut off and her groceries and gasoline expenses are more than she can afford. Unlike her family of origin, the children do not seem to be contributing to the family livelihood. What emerges from the interviews with Maria is a picture of family and economic disorganization. All of these problems lead Maria to see the good life in very conventional terms as the following quotation demonstrates.

> The good life for me would be -- and this has nothing to do with women's -- to find me a better man and stay home and enjoy myself for awhile with my family. Don't you feel -- I mean, if you're away from your family all the time, you feel they're growing up so fast in front of your eyes and you have not really enjoyed your family. You -- like going to sleep or feeding them at night and then waking up in the morning and saying, "Hey kids, get up and go to school," and you don't share your life with them, you know; you feel like you're cheating yourself. When they were babies you enjoyed them cuz you were with them, but as they are growing up, that's their main -- you know: growing up is when they need you, I think. As teenagers, you know, I know I just feel like I like to be sometimes, spend some time with them cuz I tell 'em, "You know, you kids are forever telling me I got good kids, but once in awhile, when I come home, then I get problems and the principals get in touch with me. They want to see me in school --

> that's a very uncomfortable feeling (laughter). I'm out there trying to, you know, do things for you kids, and it seems like you don't appreciate. That's when "Mamma's not home," you know, "we don't have to go to school." So I feel real strongly that sometimes I think a woman should spend more time at home, you know, and then it would be -- like men would be: -- you know, they would hold a steady job; like my old man, you know; he works off and on and off and on, and if he was to hold a steady job, you know, like ah, a woman could spend more time at home and would enjoy life more. It's career woman, you know; I think maybe those women are different, you know; they enjoy working. They're more independent, and they enjoy what they're doing -- you know, it's a career person -- cuz I don't know anything about careers. (laughter). I started in nursing, and it didn't work out. (laughter). I'd just like to stay home some.

As was pointed out earlier, Maria is not typical of most of the women we interviewed. However, many women like Maria find their way into skilled and semi-skilled job development programs because of their desperate need for money and poor screening. She is representative of a type of woman we encountered in the first year, most of whom we were unable to locate or to contact in the second and third years, most of whom were not succeeding in even semi-skilled jobs. Such women were characterized by exceptionally low educational attainment, usually only one or two years of high school, frequent participation in government training programs and erratic employment histories.

Trends in the Data

In addition to the overall impressions left by the qualitative data, there are a number of quantitative indicators that suggest the value of our pursuing further the self image, work savvy, and task competency variables.

The more successful women over the three years shared a number of common characteristics that we believe are integrally tied to our three main variables. They had more work experience, they were in their late

twenties and early thirties, they had more formal education, they came from backgrounds where their mother had been employed and their father was a skilled or semi-skilled worker, they were often the lone woman in their work setting, they had tolerant attitudes towards blue collar men, they were white, they were highly paid and they had the experience of increasing social acceptance subsequent to mastering the tasks of the job in the first year, and they also had relatively good job security. The tables below summarizes some of these findings.

TABLE 1

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

COMPARED OVER TIME

	Year I		Year II		% Total Retained	% NonTrad. Retained
RACE	Trad. (N=31)	Nontrad. (N=86)	Trad. (N=12)	Nontrad. (N=56)		
White	17	64	6	40	57%	62%
Black	3	12	2	4	33%	33%
Latina	9	5	4	3	50%	60%
Asian	2	2	1	2	50%	50%
EDUCATION						
Less than HS	9	7	1	2	19%	29%
HS Graduate	9	15	6	8	60%	53%
Some College	10	41	2	24	52%	59%
Col. Grad. +	1	16	0	14	85%	88%
AGE						
Less than 21	6	4	5	2	54%	50%
21 - 30	13	62	2	29	41%	47%
31 - 40	8	9	4	6	65%	77%
41 +	4	9	2	4	46%	44%

TABLE I (CON'T.)

FATHERS OCCUPATION - NONTRADITIONALS ONLY

	Year I		Year II		% NonTrad. Retained
	N	%	N	%	
No info.	15	17	8	20	----
Prof/Tech/Man.	32	37	15	37	47%
Sales	4	5	2	5	50%
Crafts/Foreman	15	17	8	20	53%
Operative	8	9	3	7	38%
Laborer	9	10	3	7	33%
Handyperson/ Freelancer	3	4	2	5	66%

SEX-RATIO OF WORK GROUP - NONTRADITIONALS ONLY

	Year I		Year II	
	N	%	N	%
Only female	28	33	12	29%
Less than 25% female	44	51%	19	46%
25-50% female	9	11%	2	5%

TABLE II*

INTERACTIONAL EXPERIENCES WITH CO-WORKERS
COMPARED OVER TIME - NONTRADITIONAL WOMEN

	Year I (N=86)	Year II (N=41)	% Change
Overall Interaction			
Positive	43%	54%	+ 11%
Mixed	37%	32%	- 5%
Negative	16%	7%	- 9%
Access to Sociable Interaction: Males			
Considerable	53%	41%	- 12%
Mixed	16%	34%	+ 18%
Little/None	19%	7%	- 12%
Access to Sociable Interaction: Females			
Considerable	40%	49%	+ 9%
Mixed	9%	20%	+ 11%
Little/None	8%	2%	- 6%
Helpful People			
Male	78%	88%	+ 10%
Female	21%	17%	- 4%
None	8%	5%	- 3%
Problem People			
Male	82%	76%	- 6%
Female	4%	7%	+ 3%
None	14%	22%	+ 8%
Close Relationships			
Male	33%	32%	- 1%
Female	34%	41%	+ 7%
None	31%	27%	- 4%

*Data in this table is excerpted from a Ph.D. dissertation based on this research, "Occupational Segregation and the Entry of Women Into Non-Traditional Occupations" Judith McIlwee, UCSD 1978.

TABLE II (CON'T.)

TYPES OF INTERACTIONAL PROBLEMS

	Year I (N=86)	Year II (N=41)	% Change
Overt Harassment, etc.	47%	44%	- 3%
Covert Hostility	17%	12%	- 5%
Patronizing	31%	41%	+ 10%
Sex-Laden Interaction	21%	27%	+ 6%
Ignoring	7%	7%	0

RESPONDENTS' REPORTS OF CHANGES IN INTERACTIONAL EXPERIENCES FROM YEAR 1 TO YEAR 2 (N-41)

	Frequency	Percent
Improved Interaction	20	49
Worsened Interaction	1	2
Mixed Changes in Interaction	2	5
No Change in Interaction	10	24

TABLE III*

TASK RELATED EXPERIENCES

COMPARED OVER TIME - NONTRADITIONAL WOMEN

	Year I (N=86)	Year II (N=42)	% Change
Overall Task Performance			
Successful	58%	68%	+ 10%
Mixed	24%	29%	+ 5%
Unsuccessful	-0-	-0-	-0-
Access to Work-Related Information & Help			
Considerable	45%	56%	+ 11%
Mixed	35%	29%	- 6%
Little/None	12%	5%	- 7%

TYPES OF TASK-RELATED PROBLEMS

	Year I (N=86)	Year II (N-42)
Problems w/ Physical or Technical Aspects	30%	51%
Insufficient Background	22%	-0-
Lack of Self-Confidence	21%	-0-
Men Help w/ Tasks Seen as Advantage	52%	41%
Seen as Disadvantage or Mixed Blessing	14%	15%
Inadequate Training	50%	5%

*Data in this table is excerpted from a Ph.D. dissertation based on this research. "Occupational Segregation and the Entry of Women into Non-traditional Occupations" Judith McIlwee, UCSD, 1978.

TABLE III (CON'T.)

RESPONDENTS' REPORTS OF CHANGES IN TASK-RELATED EXPERIENCES FROM YEAR 1 TO YEAR 2

(N=41)

	Frequency	Percent
Changes in Task Performance		
Improved Task Performance	24%	59%
Worsened Task Performance	-0-	-0-
No change in Task Performance	4%	10%
Changes in Self-Confidence		
Improved Self-Confidence	17	4%
Worsened Self-Confidence	-0-	-0-
No change in Self-Confidence	-0-	-0-

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Our preliminary readings of the more than one hundred interview transcripts available to us and the emerging quantitative data lead us to conclude that the high probability succeeder in a non-traditional blue collar job is a woman who....

- is self identified as a worker from an early age
- is more task oriented than interpersonally oriented
- is preoccupied with puzzles and problem solving
- gives non-ideological interpretations to her own and others (especially men) behavior
- has advanced education, frequently a college degree
- is provided with information and opportunities necessary to mastering tasks
- is in a network of "task competent" and "work environment savvy" peers
- receives support from friends and family for risk taking
- is money oriented
- is secure about her long term employment prospects in skilled trades

These findings in turn suggest the need to evaluate existing social policy and strategies for recruiting and developing women in nontraditional skilled jobs in terms of the extent to which they are...

- assuring a minimal level of familiarity with blue collar work and workers prior to job assignment
- focussing on strategies for helping people become competent at a particular jobs rather than striving for "acceptance" of newcomers in particular jobs
- surrounding newcomers with task competent and "savvy" men and women
- assuring stable employment

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